



---

## Working in Canada: A Guide for International Students

### Welcome!

As an International student you have so much to offer – your unique skill set and diverse work experience can be your competitive advantage!

Use this guide to help you prepare for work in Canada. The job search process, application procedures and culture in the Canadian workplace may be very different from your home country – this guide is designed to help you navigate how to find a job in Canada.

The job search process can take a long time. The key to success is preparation and starting the search early – with a little bit of hard work, your efforts are sure to pay off!

Visit the Asper Career Development Centre for more detailed information and if you have questions about any topics covered in this guide.

### Table of Contents

---

#### Part 1: The Canadian Job Search

- What are Canadian employers looking for?
- Job Search Strategies
- Job Search Documents
- Interviewing
- References
- Accepting a Job Offer

#### Part 2: Common Cultural Barriers

#### Part 3: Legally Working in Canada

#### Part 4: Know Your Rights

- Employment Standards
- Workplace Health and Safety
- Human Rights

#### Part 5: The Canadian Workplace

- Workplace Culture and Behaviours
- Canadian Business Etiquette

#### Part 6: Frequently Asked Questions

#### Part 7: Resources

---

## Part 1: The Canadian Job Search

---

### What are Canadian employers looking for?

Imagine Canada as an employer who is hiring a new employee. In Canada's job posting, it would list the following as requirements to the job:

- **Hard Skills** These are technical skills and will be unique to each job. They may include such things as: Microsoft Excel skills, ability to speak French or experience with WHMIS, or AutoCAD.
- **Soft Skills** These are skills that you will have developed throughout your life from a variety of places including school, volunteer work, sports, and work experience. Soft skills that are valued by Canadian employers include: teamwork, communication skills, creativity, professionalism, and the ability to be adaptable.

### As an international student, what do you bring to the Canadian workplace?

As an international student you bring a broad perspective on companies, industries and markets. Education in your home country has taught you alternative perspectives and provided you with international networks. You understand the importance of diversity, are aware of and appreciate different cultures, and possibly speak multiple languages. Not to mention the fact that your journey to Manitoba has demonstrated that you are flexible and adaptable to change. Be confident – you have a lot to offer to a Canadian employer!

## Job Search Strategies

In Canada, as few as 20% of available jobs are posted...anywhere! So where are all the jobs? The answer – the 'Hidden Job Market'. What does this mean? It means, you need to look beyond the Careers section of the newspaper and get creative in how and where you look for jobs. Try the following ideas to expand your job search:

- **Job Fairs:** Attend the U of M Job Fair and seek out job fairs hosted by industry associations.
- **Online:** Look for job boards on company and industry association websites, LinkedIn, Asper Career Portal.
- **Asper Career Development Centre:** Attend events throughout the year and visit a career coordinator.
- **Memberships:** Become an active member of a professional association.
- Find a **mentor**.
- Schedule **Informational Interviews:** The goal of these interviews is to learn more, not to ask for a job!

## Job Search Documents

**Cover Letter** A cover letter is a one page document that allows you to direct the reader's attention to aspects of your resume that are most relevant, demonstrate your knowledge of the company you are writing to and express your interest and enthusiasm for the position. The cover letter also demonstrates your writing and communication skills to a potential employer and is critical as an international applicant.

Although the job posting may not ask for a cover letter, it is recommended that you always accompany your resume with a cover letter. Your cover letter is followed by your resume.

**Resume** When you apply to a job posting, you will be asked for a resume. A resume is a marketing tool that introduces you to potential employers. Your resume should be a well-organized, easy to read summary of your skills, abilities and accomplishments. It should demonstrate to recruiters what you know, what you have accomplished, what you can do for their organization and how well you will fit within the organization.

A note regarding work experience – if you have worked with a family business in the past be strategic about how you market this experience. You want to focus the attention on what tasks and duties you completed and what skills you developed. Although working for family may have been viewed as a prestigious position in your home country, for Canadians, the perception can be very different. Unfortunately, to some Canadians, working for family may be viewed as an opportunity for that individual to spend the summer on Facebook providing the employee with no real experience reporting to management.

**Application Form** An application form is used by employers to collect relevant information from interested candidates. The standardized form makes it easy for employers to compare candidates. Take your time completing an application form – always ask for two copies, one to practice on and one to hand in! Remember to use pen, ensure your printing is easy to read, do not cross anything out or use white-out (that is why you have two copies), complete the entire form (do not write see resume) and don't forget to sign it!

**CACEE Form** The CACEE form is another example of a job application form. It outlines aspects of candidate's past career experience, volunteer roles, achievements, and extra-curricular activities. In Manitoba, the CACEE form is typically used with applying to Chartered Accounting firms.

## Interviewing

After an employer has collected and reviewed resumes and application forms, s/he will call candidates to schedule an interview. On average, an employer will interview 5 candidates per position. During an

interview, it is important that your answers are well thought out and demonstrate your skills. Being relaxed and sounding confident are equally important. In fact, the way you present yourself accounts for more than half of the overall impression you make. Things like appearance, tone of voice, friendliness and body language are an important part of your message. To help you prepare for an upcoming interview visit the Asper Career Development Centre website for a list of common interview questions.

## References

A reference is someone who can provide a prospective employer with information regarding your performance and abilities. Before you go to an interview, take the time to create a reference page. When selecting your references, choose individuals who will speak about you in a favourable way. You should have 3 references. Bring this list of references with you to the interview. Who can be a reference for you? Coaches, professors, work supervisors, and volunteer colleagues are all great examples of references.

Review the Asper Career Development Centre’s website for resources on resume and cover letter writing, tips on preparing for an interview, and techniques for effective networking. Don’t forget to book an appointment with a career coordinator to have your resume and cover letter reviewed and to practice answering those tough interview questions! Also, be sure to log onto the Career Portal to utilize the Mock Interview module, Resume Builder module and Job Posting section.

## Accepting a Job Offer

When you receive a phone call or email offering you a job, remember, you do not need to respond with a yes or no immediately. First of all, thank the employer for the offer and their confidence in your qualifications and then ask the employer by what date they need a final answer. They may give you 24 – 48 hours to consider the offer – during this time evaluate the whole offer (not salary alone). If necessary, after careful consideration and adequate research, propose a counter offer politely, only if your qualifications and the industry, position and location suggest a higher compensation package. If you are declining a position, be sure to be courteous, you never know when you may meet this hiring manager again in the future!

It is understood in Canada that you will not have one job throughout your entire career. However, you do not want to develop the reputation of being a ‘job hopper’. Once you have accepted a job you will want to spend enough time in the position so you are confident in what the position has to offer, this would be six months at a minimum. Stop applying for other jobs and contact any employers and ask to be removed from consideration.

## Part 2: Common Cultural Barriers in Job Search

(Note: These conflicting values represent a cross-section from various cultures and not one specific culture)

	Employer Expectations	Conflicting Values of Another Culture
<b>Self Promotion</b>	Assertiveness, openly discussing accomplishments.  Follow-up with employers (telephone inquiries, thank you notes, etc).	Unless presented as part of a group activity, citing achieved goals, accomplishments and skills is viewed as boastful, self-serving, and too individualistic.  Asking employers directly about status of application may be viewed as rude.

<b>Directness in communication</b>	<p>Open and direct responses to questions.</p> <p>Eye contact with interviewer, relaxed posture, and other appropriate nonverbal behavior.</p> <p>Discussion of salary and benefits only when initiated by interviewer or at time of job offer.</p> <p>Candidate asks questions about the job at the end of the interview.</p>	<p>Eye contact, especially with persons of higher status (e.g., employer/interviewer) is disrespectful.</p> <p>Appearance of criticism must be avoided to save face.</p> <p>Asking open-ended questions about the job may be seen as rude and inappropriately direct.</p>
<b>Self Disclosure</b>	<p>Personal descriptions of experiences, hobbies, strengths and weaknesses as they relate to the job. (Do not disclose unrelated personal info such as children, place of birth.)</p> <p>Answers to questions related to personality (e.g., leadership style and problem solving abilities).</p>	<p>Personal questions about likes, dislikes, etc. are considered an invasion of privacy and are discussed only with close friends and family,</p> <p>Or, these kinds of questions sometimes are seen as totally irrelevant to a candidate's job qualifications.</p> <p>Revealing outside interests may be considered a threat to the time, energy and other resources invested by a candidate into the job.</p>
<b>Career Self-Awareness</b>	<p>Demonstration of knowledge of self, career goals and how they relate to job.</p> <p>Discussion of long-range career plans.</p> <p>Ability to be self-directed in one's career development.</p>	<p>Questions about role in company indicate potential disloyalty.</p> <p>Jobs are assigned by government or family or determined by school or test score.</p> <p>Individual must be flexible to accept whatever job becomes available without regard to their own career goals.</p>
<b>Individual Responsibility in Finding Employment</b>	<p>Use of a wide variety of resources in identifying jobs (e.g. friends, family, contacts, associations, career services, academic mentors, etc.).</p> <p>Networking by candidates; personal referrals can carry great weight in evaluating a candidate's potential.</p>	<p>Jobs are found for the individual by government, school or family.</p> <p>Dependency relationships in job search are fostered. One resource (e.g. academic advisor or employment agent) will find work for job seeker with little proactive action on the part of the individual.</p>
<b>Informality in the Interview Process</b>	<p>Congenial interviewing environment that encourages openness, some joking and exchange of information.</p>	<p>Sitting with a person of higher status requires deference. The job applicant is very polite and does not ask questions or provide information that may indicate lack of respect for interviewer's position. Handshaking, touching, using first name, crossing legs, etc., are inappropriate.</p>

<b>Punctuality</b>	Arrive 5-15 minutes before appointment.	Personal relationships are more than time. Anywhere from 15 minutes to 2 hours lateness from agreed meeting time is not insulting.
<b>Effective Letters of Application and Resumes</b>	One page, error-free, concise and attractive outline of relevant job experience, skills, accomplishments and academic credentials.  Personalized to reflect each individual's strengths and capabilities.	Resumes are a detailed chronology of academic and formal work experiences and not a tool for self-promotion.
<b>Individual Equality</b>	Race, sex, and age are legally not supposed to affect the interview process  Politeness and respect are shown to all company representatives a candidate meets, whether a receptionist or the CEO.	Males and older persons may expect to assume dominance in interactions with females and younger persons.  Level of organizational hierarchy may determine the amount of respect an individual is given.  Attitudes on gender, race, and other individual characteristics and how they impact hiring decisions vary from culture to culture.
<b>Knowledge of Organization Prior to Interview</b>	Obtain as much information as possible about the company before the interview. Demonstrate awareness of organization in letter of application and during the interview.	Research about organization may indicate excessive and undesirable initiative or independence.

*(Source: "International Students and the Job Search." Goodman, A.P., J.A. Hartt, M.K. Pennington and K.P. Terrell Journal of Career Planning & Employment, Summer 1988).*

### **Part 3: Legally Working in Canada**

To work in Canada after you graduate from the Asper School of Business, University of Manitoba you must apply for a work permit under the Post-Graduation Work Permit Program (PGWPP).

To view complete eligibility details and access the online application form, visit [www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca).

### **Part 4: Know Your Rights**

#### **Employment Standards**

Most employees (contract workers excluded) fall under provincial jurisdiction of the Manitoba Employment Standard laws. These laws regulate standards regarding minimum wages, hours of work, overtime pay, public holidays, maternity and parental leave, sick leave, termination leave and notice and

other workplace entitlements and responsibilities. Detailed information regarding employment standards in Manitoba can be found at [www.gov.mb.ca](http://www.gov.mb.ca) and in Canada at [www.hrsdc.gc.ca](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca).

### **Workplace Safety and Health**

Every worker in Manitoba, regardless of age, has three basic rights in the workplace.

They are the right to know (about what hazards there are in the workplace and what precautions must be taken to prevent injuries from these hazards), the right to participate (in safety and health activities in the workplace without fear of any form of discriminatory action such as discipline), and the right to refuse (work that they reasonably believe can be dangerous to themselves or others). If you have safety and health concerns, it's your responsibility to report them.

### **Human Rights**

In Manitoba, individuals and groups have human rights protections which protect individuals and groups in Manitoba from discrimination. This means job applicants cannot be discriminated against because of ancestry, nationality or national origin, ethnic background or origin, religion or creed, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital or family status, political belief, political association or political activity, physical or mental disability.

The law also protects individuals from harassment by employers or co-workers. Individuals are encouraged to speak to employers to resolve discrimination or harassment issues. If not successfully resolved, employees are encouraged to seek assistance from their union or from the provincial or federal human rights commission. More information can be found here: [www.manitobahumanrights.ca](http://www.manitobahumanrights.ca).

### **Seeking Help for Employment Rights Issues**

It is important to know that employees cannot be punished for claiming their rights. Should you have any questions or concerns, seek help from [www.gov.mb.ca/labour/standards/](http://www.gov.mb.ca/labour/standards/) as soon as possible.

## **Part 5: The Canadian Workplace**

---

### **Canadian Workplace Culture and Behaviours**

**Greetings** Typically, when entering a room for an interview or meeting, the person greeting you will make eye contact and extend his/her hand in offer of a handshake. It is recommended that you reciprocate this behaviour. Before taking the seat closest to you, it is best to wait to be asked and directed to sit down. After getting to know someone, it is acceptable to address the individual by their first name only.

**Verbal Communication, Non-Verbal Communication** Eye contact, a handshake and personal space (keep at least an arm's length away from the person you are speaking to) are all expected by Canadian employers. In terms of verbal communication, Canadian employer's value individuals who are 'politically correct'. This means individuals who are not offensive in their workplace jokes or actions, individuals who would appeal to a large audience. Also, Canadians typically shy away from or question a person's true intent if they come across as too boastful.

**Punctuality** Arriving 10 minutes before a scheduled appointment or your regular shift at work is considered normal and appropriate behaviour. Showing up late for meetings or your regular work day shows disrespect and can be reason for canceling an appointment or being disciplined at work. If you know you will be late, be sure to call ahead to your supervisor to inform them that you are running late and the reason why.

**Dress** It is always a good idea when you are starting a new job to ask about the dress code. Be aware, that most workplaces are now scent free – this means do not wear lotions and perfumes to work. General don'ts in regard to dress on the job include: no cut off shorts, no flip flops, and no shirts with disrespectful logos.

**Canadian Business Etiquette** To navigate effectively in the Canadian workplace, try these tips:

- Personal Hygiene: Majority of workplaces are 'scent-free' zones, this means no colognes or perfumes. Smoking is not allowed in Canadian workplaces. Having fresh, clean breath is common sense in business, always keep a toothbrush and mints handy.
- Drinking alcohol on the job is strongly discouraged, even during lunches.
- Turn phones off during in person meetings.
- Gifts may be perceived as bribes when making deals or given to management.

## Part 6: Frequently Asked Questions

---

### Should I include my work permit status on my resume?

No, do not include your work permit status on your resume. Based on your past education and work experience, the employer will learn that you are an international student. In the interview process, the employer may ask you, 'Are you legally authorized to work in Canada?' This is a legal question.

### Are there questions that are illegal for an employer to ask?

Yes. The following topics are not to be discussed in an interview.

Nationality/Citizenship	Affiliations	Age
Color or Race	Marital/Family Status	Religion
Physical Appearance	Disability	Arrest Record

### What can I do to make myself a more attractive candidate?

To become a more attractive candidate to Canadian employers, try these tips:

- Have your resume and cover letters reviewed by the Asper Career Development Centre
- Schedule a mock interview before attending your first interview
- Become familiar with the rules and regulations regarding your work permit
- Research the industries, employers and positions in which you are interested
- Continue to improve your English skills
- Develop your professional online presence (i.e. LinkedIn)
- Network as much as you can by attending events hosted by the Asper Career Development Centre and those of professional associations affiliated with your career target.

## Part 6: Resources

---

University of Manitoba

- International Centre for Students ([www.umanitoba.ca/student/ics](http://www.umanitoba.ca/student/ics))
- English Learning Centre ([www.umanitoba.ca/student/elc](http://www.umanitoba.ca/student/elc))
- Academic Learning Centre ([www.umanitoba.ca/virtualllearningcommons](http://www.umanitoba.ca/virtualllearningcommons))

Immigrate to Manitoba ([www.immigratemanitoba.com](http://www.immigratemanitoba.com))

### References:

*Western, The Student Success Centre*

*University of Saskatchewan, Student Employment and Career Centre: Working in Canada: A Guide for International Students*

*TalentEgg: Insight for international students: Learning Canada's workplace culture* By: Arwen Kidd

*UB School of Management*

Room 254 Drake Centre, University of Manitoba R3T 5V4 P: (204) 474-6596 F: (204) 474-8301